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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PI, G/TIP
WHITE HOUSE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/14/2018
TAGS: PHUM PREL KMPI SMIG ELAB MU
SUBJECT: TIP REPORT DISPUTE TAKES TOLL ON EMBASSY
ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

REF: A. MUSCAT 474
1B. MUSCAT 464
1C. MUSCAT 444
1D. MUSCAT 425

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) The placement of Oman on Tier 3 of the 2008 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report has had significant negative repercussions on the Embassy's relations with the Omani government, as well as with non-governmental organizations and certain private individuals. As reported previously, the direct fallout from the dispute over Oman's Tier 3 status includes:

-- Immediate suspension of government cooperation with the U.S. on TIP and TIP-related issues (ref D);
-- Cancellation of the visit of a U.S. delegation led by Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, Special Envoy for Nuclear Nonproliferation, to discuss nuclear cooperation issues (ref D);
-- Withdrawal by the Royal Omani Police of the Embassy's "special access" to criminal statistics and law enforcement information, which could severely compromise post's ability to assess the security situation in Oman (ref A);
-- Cancellation of a MEPI-funded parliamentary exchange program visit, implemented by the International Republican Institute (IRI), by staffers of Oman's Majlis al-Shura to Lithuania (ref A);
-- Indefinite postponement of all IRI-conducted training previously scheduled for the Majlis al-Shura (ref A); and
-- A decision by the Oman Journalist Association to cancel its application for a MEPI local grant to run a junior journalist program (ref A).

12. (C) In addition to the concrete actions listed above, a number of contacts, particularly those concerned with labor issues, have stepped away from their previously close cooperative ties with the Embassy. For example, the Director General of Labor Care at the Ministry of Manpower, leaders of Oman's General Federation of Omani Workers, and the head of one of Oman's largest employer organizations have all been unresponsive or curt in their dealings with the Embassy, whereas prior to the TIP report they were very open and forthcoming with information. Contacts at the embassies of labor source countries are also more hesitant to discuss TIP-related issues. (Note: The Pakistani and Bangladeshi ambassadors in Muscat have recently stated to local press that their nationals in Oman do not suffer from any violations of their rights. End Note.)

13. (C) More negative ramifications from the Omani government's hard-line stance on TIP may be forthcoming. The languid pace of business in the hot summer months, and the long vacations taken by many contacts, has so far limited the full scope of potential ill effects of the TIP dispute. More

importantly, the Omani government is likely waiting for an official U.S. response to its demand for a re-evaluation of its Tier 3 status before taking further action. If it considers our response to be inadequate, it will most probably institute additional punitive measures as part of its "fundamental reappraisal" of its relationship with the U.S. Given the critical challenges that we face in the Middle East, a loss or reduction of Omani cooperation on the peace process, the situation in Iraq, Iran and other such issues would be a significant blow.

GRAPPO